



PEROMYSCUS LEUCOPUS.

J. Audouin del. F. C. Bonaparte sculp.

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PERAGALEA LAGOTIS.

Large-eared Peragalea.

Perameles lagotis, Reid in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part IV. p. 129.—Waterh. Nat. Lib. Mamm., vol. ix. (Marsupialia), p. 153. pl. xii.

Paragalia lagotis, Gray, App. to Gray's Trav., vol. ii. p. 401.

Peragalea lagotis, List of Mamm. in Brit. Mus. Coll., p. 96.

Dol-goitch or *Dal-gyte*, Aborigines of Western Australia.

Rabbit of the Colonists.

THE western portion of Australia is the only locality in which this fine animal has yet been discovered, evidencing with our comparatively recent acquisitions *Myrmecobius* and *Tarsipes*, that the mammalogy of that part of the continent is fully as interesting, both for novelty and singularity of form, as that of the eastern coast, which is inhabited by the *Ornithorhynchus*, *Koala*, &c.

The first notice of this animal on record is that published in the "Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London" for 1836, Mr. Reid, a member of the Society, having described it, from a skin exhibited at the scientific meeting of the 13th of December in that year, under the name of *Perameles lagotis*: he was in error, however, when he stated it to inhabit Van Diemen's Land. At the end of his paper, wherein the external characters and the dentition of the animal are minutely described, Mr. Reid gave it as his opinion that the distinctions between it and the other members of the genus *Perameles* were so marked, that it might be considered the type of a distinct genus, for which the term *Macrotis* would be an appropriate designation; he did not, however, publish any generic characters, and as the term *Macrotis* is objectionable from its similarity to the specific name, I am induced to adopt the generic designation proposed for it by Mr. Gray.

Were any attempts to be made at introducing the indigenous animals of Australia into Europe for ornamental purposes, or as additions to our articles of food, the present would be one of those with which it would be most desirable to make the trial. That it bears confinement well and contentedly, is proved by the fact of one having lived in the Gardens of the Zoological Society of London for some time; its death was doubtless attributable to the want of a suitable substitute for its natural food.

That its flesh is sweet and delicate, I have abundant testimony. When boiled it resembles that of the rabbit; prejudice would therefore be the only obstacle to its general adoption as an article of food, and this surely might easily be combated. I trust from what I have here said, that a sufficient hint has been thrown out to induce those who have the opportunity to import it into Europe.

The *Peragalea lagotis* is tolerably abundant over the whole extent of the grassy districts of the interior of the Swan River colony, where it lives for the most part in pairs, usually selecting spots where, the soil being loose, its powerful claws enable it to excavate the earth and form burrows with amazing rapidity. Into these holes it always retreats for safety; and as these subterraneous runs are both deep and long, it frequently eludes the pursuit of the natives, who hunt it for the sake of its flesh.

Its food consists of insects, their larvæ, and the roots of trees and plants; a favourite article is a large grub, the larva of a species of *Cerambyx*? which is deposited in the roots of the *Acaciæ*, and which is equally in request with the natives, who never fail to cut it out from an exposed root whenever they observe the *Dal-gyte* has been unsuccessful.

The number of young brought forth at a time has not yet been satisfactorily ascertained, but we may fairly presume that they are at least three or four.

The sexes present no difference whatever in their colouring, but the female is smaller than the male.

General tint of the upper parts of the head and body ashy grey; sides of the head, shoulders, and the sides of the body very pale vinous rust-colour; under parts of the head and body and the inner side of the limbs white; fore-legs and feet white, with a dark greyish patch on the outside of the former; tarsi white above, the hairs covering the under surface of a smoky brown colour; forepart of the outer legs white, outer and hinder part blackish grey; a whitish line extends backwards on the sides of the rump; soft long hair, coloured like that of the body, clothes about an inch and a half of the base of the tail; beyond this, for about three inches and a half, the tail is covered with black and somewhat harsh hairs; on the under side of the tail they are scarcely half an inch in length, but on the upper side most of them are upwards of one inch in length; the remainder of the tail is covered with white hairs, which increase in length on the upper side to the tip, where they are about two inches in length; on the under side they are short, and decrease in length towards the apex of the tail, the extreme point of which is naked; moustaches moderately long and black; ears almost naked, the margins fringed with whitish hairs; externally on the forepart they are covered with minute brown hairs.

The figure is of the natural size.